

CERVANTES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY ANNE T. WILBUR.

Don Miguel Cervantes Saavedra, was born, in 1547, at Alcala de Henarez, a town of New Castile. His father, Don Rodrigo, was a poor hidalgo, "one of those who have a lance in the rack, an old buckler, a lean steed and a hound." He had served on sea and on land, and spoke often and enthusiastically of his campaigns; but, as he well knew what glory costs, and what it brings, he sent his son at an early age to Madrid, to pursue his studies there, resolving, when he should be of age, to introduce him into the safe and peaceful path of ecclesiastical preferments. Unfortunately, Don Miguel, after having finished his humanities, thought himself wiser than his father. He renounced the prebends and bishoprics his family had planned for him; a resolution praiseworthy in itself, considering the character and disposition of the person, but which was scarcely prudent. In fact, Miguel had associated himself with the students of Madrid, and frequented the taverns, which were the places of resort of the beaux-esprits and gallants of the capital; he had acquired the tastes of both, and, as was natural, believed himself capable of surpassing all. It was this which turned his attention away from the church, and first inspired him with the idea of becoming a poet, and living by the productions of his pen, an idea which would never have entered his head if he had had the good sense of the old hidalgo.

The young Cervantes, it must be confessed, had more wit and more imagination than is usually found among people who make these a profession; but he felt, rather than knew, his genius; it was destined to be revealed to him at a later period by that hard master, experience. Meanwhile, as he must eat and drink, he could not suffer his pen to remain idle, but instead of using his own ideas, he borrowed those of others. During two or three years, he made verses which differed little from others of the same period, unless in being worse, since they were not even paid for in compliments. Still confiding in the promises of his muse, but still ignorant in what direction she summoned him, he published, in 1569, a book on which he hoped to found a reputation. This was a pastoral romance, entitled *Philene*, and which, though as insipid, improbable and tiresome as any of the same species, had, nevertheless, more success than his verses.

Weary of practising so unprofitable a profession, he turned his attention to that of arms. Destitute of everything, but distrusting nothing, excepting the good taste of the Spanish public, with his heart full of illusions, loyalty and courage, he set out one fine morning, and arrived, fasting, at the house of his father, to whom he made known his design. The good hidalgo detained him some days, and advised him, since he was ambitious, to seek a situation at court. But, perceiving that, in proportion as Miguel recovered his embonpoint he listened to him with less interest, Don Rodrigo sighed, caused his lean steed to be saddled, and gave it to the young adventurer. This, alas! with his benediction, was all he had to give. Cervantes asked no more.

Behold him *en route* for Italy. What fine dreams were his! Italy was in commotion. There was fighting also in Germany, in France, in all Europe, and Spain had soldiers everywhere. Soldiers would naturally become ensigns, ensigns captains, captains—who knows to what distinction a captain might not arrive? If the military career has bounds, imagination has none; and, at this moment, you may be sure, Don Miguel was not the man to limit it. Unfortunately, on his arrival in Italy, he found a truce. He, therefore, descended from his Rosinante, not to bestride a war-horse, but to become simply, like Gil Blas, *valet de chambre* to a bishop, Cardinal Aquaviva, which was a poor reality after such brilliant dreams.

The following year, war having burst forth anew, and with more fury than ever, he threw aside the livery of the cardinal, and joyfully enrolled himself under the banners of Mark Antony Colonna, Duc de Palliano, who commanded the Venitian troops. His first campaign was not fortunate. He embarked in a ship which was dispatched to the assistance of the Isle of Cyprus, threatened by the Turks. The island was taken, the inhabitants exterminated, and the ship which bore Cervantes escaped, only by miracle, from the victorious fleet.

These are but the chances of war, and a courageous man is not easily disheartened. Don Miguel took his revenge at the battle of Lepant, in which he distinguished himself among the bravest. Unfortunately, he was shot in his left arm, and maimed for the rest of his days. This was all he gained on that famous day. But as his right arm remained, he could still serve his country and seek his fortune. In 1572 he made an expedition to the Morea, and, in the month of September, 1575, after all his journeys, after all his fatigues, he was no better off than before.

He resolved then to revisit his country, and, with that intention, embarked on the galley *Le Soleil*. After all, if he had not been promoted, he had lost an arm; he could, therefore, tip his hat over his ear and raise his voice in hosteleries, when battles were talked of, along with the rest.

But misfortunes never come single; the crew of *Le Soleil* were captured by a corsair, and our adventurer, instead of landing in Spain, became a slave at Algiers.

His first master was a Venitian renegade. He was called Hassan, and was aga of the soldiery. Though he made all in the kingdom tremble before the ascendancy given him by an authority, whose limits no one knew exactly, least of all Hassan himself, he did not terrify Cervantes. It seems, on the contrary, that the latter inspired him with a certain respect, and even fear, which do honor to the instinct of the barbarian. He has himself informed us that he performed the most unheard-of exploits to obtain his liberty, and constantly feared being impaled for some of his feats of prowess. "But," adds he, "Hassan never gave, or caused to be given, a single blow, or said a harsh word. He contented himself with causing me to be more closely guarded, to deprive me of all chance of escape."

Instead of being discouraged, Don Miguel became but the more daring. Closely watched

night and day, and having not a single sous, he might, indeed, without incurring any censure, have thought only of his personal safety; but he was one of those men, who, amid their own misfortunes, have hearts to aid others. He remembered then his companions in servitude, and swore to deliver them also. Nothing was more easy, as you will see. It was only necessary to overthrow the dey and seize the Kasbah in the name of the king of Spain. If the plot succeeded, imagine the results: piracy destroyed, slavery abolished, an empire added to the heritage of Philip II. Cervantes, without farther deliberation, set himself to the work. He first communicated his plans to the slaves of the aga; and soon all those of Algiers were in the secret. He afterwards gained over the Jews and renegades, and assured himself of accomplices, even in the harem of the Pacha. Unless it was the birds of heaven, we know not who acted as his interpreter, or carried his messages. The fact was that he moved the whole city under the very eyes of his guardians, and without awakening any suspicion. Everything promised success. The day was set; each was on the *qui vive*, and this noble resolution, conceived in the brain of a rhymist, and whose principal agent was a lame soldier, would have been successfully carried into execution, but for the treachery of a confederate.

Conducted before the dey, he did not attempt to defend himself. He dared even to assert that if he was allowed to live, his Catholic majesty would not fail to buy him, or to revenge him, if he should be put to death. The Turk reflected, and thought that in fact the king of Spain could not have in his states many people of similar stuff. He therefore purchased Cervantes, and confined him in his own seraglio, either that he might secure the safety of this dangerous slave himself, or that he might learn what value was attached in Europe to the life of a man of genius.

Five years rolled away, and, as will be imagined, the ministers of Spain had not offered a single maravedi in exchange for the prisoner. He might have left his bones on the earth of Algiers, if the Fathers of Mercy had not at last purchased his freedom.

He was thirty-four years of age when he returned to his country. Don Rodrigo was dead. His niece had sold, to pay the half of his ransom, a large part of his little inheritance. There remained to Cervantes, therefore, no other resource but his pen. He went to Madrid and resumed his ancient occupation. But do not think he commenced by writing Don Quixote. Though he had travelled, seen, and suffered much, and inwardly flattered himself that he knew all the phases of life, he had nevertheless, for his own instruction and ours, some new things to learn. He had never been in love: he became so. It was under the influence of this new-born passion that he composed the first part of his romance of Galatea—a pastoral allegory, in which he introduced himself in the character of a shepherd. Very soon he espoused the object of his love—a damsel—noble, but like himself, poor—named Catherine Salazar y Palacios d'Esquivas. This was, to speak after the manner of Sancho, Hunger espousing Thirst. Once married, adieu to

white sheep! adieu to the crook and rosy ribbons! It became necessary to fill the scrip and to keep away the wolf—that is the officers—from the fold.

From this moment Cervantes began to see life under its saddest and most discouraging aspect; for this wife, whom he loved always, and to whom, in his romance, he had painted the future under such glowing colors, Catherine wanted the necessities of life—I mean daily bread and nightly shelter. Meanwhile Cervantes, inspired not by the muse, but by hunger and by creditors, composed, one after another, thirty plays, almost equally poor. We are disposed to doubt him when he speaks of their success at Madrid.

This pretended success did not prevent his soliciting a modest situation under government, and going to establish himself at Seville when he had obtained it. It was there that he composed his novels. But he did not remain at Seville. He wandered with his wife from city to city, always writing, always needy. The proceeds of his works, and the liberality of his protectors, barely saved him from dying of hunger. Such was his poverty, that he was once or twice accused of appropriating the public money.

One day when he was in prison for this or some other offence, by way of amusing himself, he commenced writing a romance. His mind, naturally amiable and indulgent, had been for some time disposed to satire. In the *Journey to Pamassus*, published in 1604, he had ridiculed more than one poet whom he really admired and had even imitated years before. Disenchantment comes with age. This time he had no other idea than to turn into ridicule the works then in vogue, those romances of chivalry with which women, young people and old men, were still entertained, though chivalry had long been dead. It had disappeared in Spain with the Moors; and throughout the rest of Europe was only a vague memory. The contrast of this old relic of the past with modern manners, all those institutions of the Middle Ages, whose spirit was lost, but whose shadow still existed, inspired Rabelais, in France, with *Pantagruel*, at about the same time in which the Spanish prisoner wrote that ingenious parody which is the commencement of *Don Quixote*. On assuming the pen, it is probable that Cervantes did not himself suspect the use he was to make of this idea. According to appearances he proposed to give this badinage only the dimensions of a novel, and to stop at the *great and important review which the curate and the barber made of the library of Don Quixote*. The first six chapters prove that his intention was only to ridicule romances of chivalry.

But as this composition advanced, when he had once started this vivid and grotesque figure of a hidalgo, he found it impossible to lay it aside; he then became, for the first and only time in his life, truly inspired. He no longer imitated or parodied; he had found a hero who was indeed his hero, and a subject in which he could—bitter consolation!—recall his life's experience, his dreams of glory, his dreams of love, all those *poor lessons* which he had received from fortune, and which, nevertheless, had not corrected him. He would conduct to the end of his history this

honest hidalgo, this virtuous madman, who consumed his substance in the pursuit of glory, and who, instead of glory, reaped only blows. At this moment he introduces Sancho, who is the extreme of simplicity beside the extreme of imagination: Sancho, who trotting on his ass behind the knight, like tardy experience, arrives always after the evil is done, and though closely following, hastening and exclaiming, is almost never listened to.

These two personages, Don Quixote and Sancho, are inseparable; they are the soul and the body, light and shade. The one represents whatever there is of generous in human nature, and the other all its selfish and narrow instincts. Give to Don Quixote a little of the good sense of his squire, and to Sancho a little of the loyalty and heroism which characterize his master, and of two fools you will have made a wise man, wise at least in the opinion of men. But they rarely agree; and why should they? Do we often, in this world, see imagination united with reason? Are the generous impulses of the heart often approved by the vulgar wisdom which we call experience?

The first part of *Don Quixote* appeared in 1605. Of all the works of Cervantes, this romance is the only one which deserves to be read; but this is a master-piece, and perhaps the most original, most amusing, most profound work which exists in any language. Without being superior to Moliere, to La Fontaine, to Shakspeare, and to all those great painters of humanity, whose works we admire, Cervantes has raised man under a broader point of view than they had done. His heroes, extravagant and fantastical as they may be, bear more resemblance to many among us than all others on the stage or in romance. In fact, the Harpagoes, the Tartuffes, the Lovelaces, represent, in their greatest generality, only varieties of the human species.

Everybody is not, thank Heaven! miserly, hypocritical, false, licentious. But who of us does not bear within himself his Don Quixote and his Sancho Panza? Who of us has not more than once in his life fought windmills? Who of us has not hastened breathlessly to that marvellous island which attracted Sancho in the steps of the knight? Alas! the wasted courage, the sword-thrusts in the water, the hope which outlives so many deceptions, those charming conversations of the ingenious hidalgo with his grosser squire, so cowardly, so gormandizing, so lazy,—have we not their counterparts in our own history?—are not these the conversations we have a thousand times held with ourselves?

Nevertheless, singular as it may seem, although when this book appeared, all Europe welcomed it with enthusiasm, Spain alone did not comprehend it. The author continued to live poor, forgotten, despised. In order to find readers, he was obliged to scatter among the people an anonymous pamphlet (the *Busca pia*), in which he asserted that Don Quixote concealed, under the veil of allegory, a satire on the most distinguished personages of the court! I do not know how far he calumniated himself. Perhaps, indeed, while composing *Don Quixote*, he had thought more than once of Charles V. and Philip II., chasing

through Europe the chimera of universal monarchy, and of Spain which was exhausting herself in the effort to follow, neglecting her commerce and her agriculture, and impoverishing herself from day to day in the pursuit of fabulous riches.

However that may be, Spain had not yet awakened from her brilliant dream. She did not find in this romance the puerile allusions which were promised her, and refused to pardon the author for his ridicule of chivalry. In 1614, there appeared, at Arragon, under a fictitious name, a pretended continuation of the adventures of the knight of La Mancha, in which the author of Don Quixote was overwhelmed with abuse, and reproached even for his glorious wounds.

The best reply which Cervantes could make to such outrages, was to publish the second part of his work. It appeared in 1615, had the same success in Europe, and experienced in Spain the same neglect as the first. It was only towards the end of the eighteenth century that the countrymen of Cervantes opened their eyes respecting this man, who is the only writer they have to oppose to those of which other nations are proud. At this time, Spain was sufficiently poor, exhausted and ruined to comprehend at last the reality of the pictures of Don Quixote; but the author had been dead more than a century—he had died a year after the publication of his work, poor and discouraged.

The Fathers of Mercy, who had formerly paid his ransom with the fruit of their alms, and had redeemed him from slavery, were alone present at his last hour. Doubtless, they saw before them not a man of genius, but a soul in trouble, disgusted with men and things, aspiring after repose. They aided it to throw aside its chains, and softened by their prayer the passage of this afflicted soul from the world where it had suffered so much to its true country.

His mortal remains were quietly interred in their convent, on the 23d of April, 1616, the same day on which England buried Shakspeare with pomp in the vaults of Westminster. So, in 1775, under the reign of Charles III., when the name of Cervantes had become celebrated beyond the Pyrenees, no one knew where he was born, or where he died, so entirely had he been forgotten. Already had Spanish enthusiasm, passing from one extreme to the other, compared him to Homer, and justified itself for this parallel by pointing out seven cities which disputed the honor of having given birth to the *Old Cripple*, as formerly seven Grecian cities had claimed to be the birth-place of the old blind man.

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF CERVANTES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

BY ANNE T. WILBUR.

About 1614, at Toledo, in a poor room, furnished with a bed, a few chairs, a plumed hat, a pistol and a sword suspended against the wall, a man with long hair and thick moustaches, meagre and worn with suffering, was sitting beside a rickety table, covered with letters and books. This was Don Miguel Cervantes, then paymaster in the army of Philip III, thanks to the patronage of Fernandez de Castro, Count de Lemos. As we have just learned, this place and this patronage alone only prevented his dying of hunger.

But the author of *Don Quixote*, thinking only of his book, looked on himself at this moment as the happiest of men. He had just received five translations of it in different languages of Europe, and thirty letters, in which the most illustrious writers of Germany, Italy and France, placed him on a level with Homer, Virgil and Ovid.

Forgetting that he was shivering with the cold and that he had not breakfasted, he wrapped himself proudly in his ragged cloak, leaned his lame arm on his old sword of Lepante, and paced his chamber as if he were strolling on the summit of Parnassus.

Very soon a woman entered, beautiful, notwithstanding her sadness, in her rich wavy hair, double necklace of beads and woollen robe.

"Here is glory for you, Catherine!" exclaimed the poet, throwing to Donna Cervantes his noble prizes of books and letters.

"Glory?" replied the Senora, turning away her tearful eyes; "a shining medal, of which here is the dark reverse."

And she handed her husband three letters. The first was from his editor in Madrid: it announced that *Don Quixote* was bought only to be ridiculed, and that the author owed him two thousand reals, for want of which he must close his shop.

"Blind and ungrateful country!" said Cervantes, dropping into a chair. "Translated and admired throughout all Europe, neglected and despised in my native country! What a recompense for blood shed on ten battle-fields, and a captivity of ten years among the barbarians!"

In the second letter, the Count de Lemos informed him that his enemies had denounced him as appropriating the State funds, and that the king was about to deprive him of his office.

"Another blow from my Zoile Avellaneda!" said the hidalgo, shrugging his shoulders, and opening the third billet.

It was from the proprietor of the house, who summoned him to pay his rent or quit.

"This is the reason why I have returned empty-handed," said the Senora, blushing with mortification: "we are refused all credit. You will be compelled, great man," added she, forcing a smile, "to breakfast on this crust of bread dipped in oil."

What cared the soldier of Lepante, the author of *Don Quixote*? He thought only of the neglect of his *chef d'œuvre*, and of the methods of bringing it to light.

"I have it! I have it!" cried he, suddenly, after a few moments of reflection. "I will compel Spain and the king himself to become interested in the knight of *La Mancha*!"

His wife looked on without comprehending him. He embraced her with a sort of delirium, and began to labor, gnawing his morsel of bread.

Two days and two nights his pen ran over the paper. He stopped only to laugh or dance with joy, as if he had discovered a treasure.

Three weeks afterwards, the anonymous pamphlet of the *Busca Pié* appeared at Madrid, and caused to be sold in forty-eight hours three hundred copies of *Don Quixote*.

How was this revolution wrought? We are about to learn this from the Count de Lemos, who enters gloomily and severely the house of his protégé.

Cervantes, exhausted by labor, was in bed. His wife, who was touching her guitar, rose suddenly as she saw the great nobleman.

"Fly!" said the latter, offering his purse to the writer; "fly quickly before the alguazils arrest you."

"Arrest us!" exclaimed Donna Catherine in terror.

"Yes. There has just been published at Madrid a pamphlet which will complete your ruin, by proving that *Don Quixote* is a bitter satire; that under the names of imaginary heroes, it portrays the king of Spain and the principal personages of his court."

"Ah! this pamphlet has made a noise then," demanded the dreamy and ironical poet, from his pallet.

"An infernal noise! It is this which has caused the order for your arrest."

"Wonderful!" said Cervantes; "at last I have succeeded. When *Don Quixote* was only a good work, no one deigned to read it. It becomes a bad one and every body devours it. Its author needs only to be a martyr in order to arrive at the apogee of glory. Let them come and put me into irons. It was I who wrote the *Busca Pié*."

"You!" said Lemos, comprehending the despair of his friend. "Then the pamphlet is only a falsehood; and I can save you by declaring all to the king!"

"Take care how you do so!" exclaimed the poet. "This would be to plunge myself and my book again into darkness. Leave us both to our renown by scandal and persecution. It is neither your fault nor mine, if crime succeeds better than talent!"

The count admired this sublime raillery, and promised silence to his protégé.

"When all Spain shall have read *Don Quixote*," said he, "it will be time to prove that it is only a *chef d'œuvre*!"

That very evening Cervantes was confined in the prison of Toledo.

But the public blindness and the hatred of his rivals were more powerful than the stratagem of his genius. After some days of curiosity, *Don Quixote* was rejected on finding it inoffensive; and Avellaneda inflicted a final blow by the audacious publication of a second part of *The Knight of La Mancha*, a coarse and monotonous rhapsody, in which Cervantes was treated as an old cripple,

poor, peevish, gossiping and slanderous, amid the applause of all the masters of criticism and literature of the times.

The rumor of these abuses reaching the cell of the poet, he resumed his pen; and in the gloomy walls of a prison, by the dim light of its lattices, and amid the sound of the bolts which separated him from the world, Cervantes wrote the genuine sequel of *Don Quixote*, that second part even more admirable than the first.

He received, then, a second visit from the Count de Lemos, who, more ingenious than himself, formed thus his plan of revenge.

Attacked by an obstinate malady of the eyes, and condemned for a month to darkness, Philip III. had demanded of this great nobleman a skilful reader to beguile his loneliness, and had himself designated, as the subject of this amusement, the *Don Quixote* of Avellaneda, the only one he knew.

One morning, therefore, the envoy of the Count de Lemos, introduced by him, installed himself by the dim light of a feeble lamp in the dark chamber of the grandson of Charles V., the son of Philip II., this king who had never laughed, and who was now more gloomy than ever.

The first sitting was cold enough, notwithstanding the lively eloquence of the reader, who accented and varied his subject as if he had improvised it. Nevertheless, the king expressed himself satisfied.

The next day, the interview was more interesting. The reader was so inspired, that Philip III. thought himself the spectator of a comedy. He saw and heard *Don Quixote*, *Sancho*, all the personages of the story, as though they had acted and spoken in the very room. He deigned to smile, and to express his approbation.

The third sitting broke the ice. The king, captivated, forgot the hour, and suffered to escape a burst of laughter which astonished the echoes of his chamber. The reader, encouraged, redoubled his energy, and Philip III., laughing heartily, exclaimed, like a simple mortal, "This is delightful! It is a masterpiece!"

This news made a great sensation in the palace, and throughout Madrid. "The king has laughed! he has laughed aloud! It is the *Don Quixote* of Avellaneda which has wrought this miracle! Honor and glory to Avellaneda!"

And the latter plumed himself on his triumph, in the court and in the city. He saw himself congratulated by the king, and elevated to all the dignities of glory and genius. As to poor Cervantes, the old cripple, *Zoile* and his friends had never lavished upon him more abuse and epigrams.

The only regret of Avellaneda was that he could not become acquainted with and embrace the individual who had so successfully interpreted his work. But introduced and carried off each day by the Count de Lemos, the reader stole away from their ovations with incorruptible modesty.

The sittings continued, increasing in length and animation. The king no longer had ears but for *Don Quixote* and its interpreter. He forgot Spain and the Indies, his ancestors and etiquette, his ennui and his sorrows, for the exploits of the good knight, the proverbs of *Sancho*, the adventures of *Dulcinea*, and the government of *Bara-*

taria. There were prolonged fits of hilarity, passages repeated, bon mots quoted, and applied by the august invalid to the courtiers. In short, his majesty was as happy as the poorest in his empire.

The effect of all this was to hasten the king's recovery. His return to his palace and first reception took place a week sooner than the allotted time. All Madrid expressed its joy by fetes, and Avellaneda ruined himself in magnificent clothing to present himself before Philip III.

The great day arrived, an immense crowd defiled before the monarch, now restored to his subjects. Conducted by the Duke de Lerma, prime-minister, draped like a potentate in his embroidered cloak, armed with a magnificent copy of his *Don Quixote*, Avellaneda bent his knee before his majesty, and presented the book which had had the honor of diverting him.

"Say of curing me," replied the king, "and ask of me what you will."

Avellaneda claimed the place of Cervantes at Toledo with a higher rank and double salary—and Philip III. was about to have granted all with a word—when the Count de Lemos approached with a man, poorly clad, at sight of whom everybody exclaimed:—

"Cervantes here!"

"Yes, Cervantes," replied the count; "the author and the reader of the true *Don Quixote*, of that which has charmed you twenty days, sire, and to which the Senor Avellaneda is entirely a stranger. Pardon me for having dared to liberate on parole one of your prisoners, and for seizing the opportunity to reveal a talent which has been calumniated."

At the same time, Cervantes placed in the hands of the king the manuscript which he had read to him, and Philip III. recognized the passages which made him laugh at the remembrance of them.

To laugh thus, was to pardon. Cervantes then related that it was himself who had written the pamphlet of the *Busca Pié*, that there was not an offensive word in *Don Quixote*, and that his only crime was to have been denounced by the Senor Avellaneda and his friends.

"Very well!" resumed the king, at last opening his eyes, "you have twice restored my sight; ask of me what you please."

"The printing of my book at the expense of the State," modestly replied the poet, "with the notes and commentaries of foreigners who have appreciated me better than my countrymen."

"I promise you this honor," said Philip, giving him his hand to kiss; "and the Senor Avellaneda, who has taken your work, may also take your place—in the prison of Toledo."

Thus was Cervantes avenged, and his unworthy plagiarist punished. But, alas! the king himself could not control destiny.

Avellaneda recovered freedom and riches, while the man of genius became again poor and forgotten. And it was not until a century and a half after his death, that Spain at last fulfilled the promise of Philip III., by publishing a national edition of *Don Quixote*, enriched with all the tributes of Castilian science, arts and industry.